Post 4/21/70

Exiles Say Guerrillas Open 2 'Fronts' in Cuba

CAPT. VICENTE MENDEZ
. . . identified as leader

MIAMI, April 20 (UPI)—The militant Cuban exile Alpha 66 organization claimed today it has landed "many" guerrillas in Cuba and opened "two basic fronts" of military operations against the Fidel Castro regime since last Friday.

The claims, made at a news conference by Alpha 66 Secretary General Nazario Sargen, were not otherwise substantiated. They followed Sunday's dramatic announcement by Premier Castro that four of his troops and two invaders were killed in skirmishes last Friday and Saturday.

Havana Radio, which broadcast Castro's announcement, did not report any new developments up to late today.

[State Department spokesman Robert J. McCloskey said he had "no information" on the Alpha 66 statements. Other officials said they had no way of gauging the scale of the landing, but found it interesting that Castro had announced it personally.]

Sargen, while refusing to say exactly how many men had landed in Cuba, emphasized that military activity is not limited to the area around Baracoa, on the eastern tip of Oriente Province where Castro said a landing took place.

"The contingents of Alpha 66 in Cuban territory are divided into two basic fronts," a written release said.

"They are guerrilla front No. 1 'Julio Cesar Ramirez' and guerrilla front No. 1 'Everardo Salas' along with diverse guerrilla focal points."

It said "many Alpha 66 men are already in Cuba and others will not delay in arriving there . . . our men are not from the CIA, nor the U.S. government, nor reactionaries, nor mercenaries."

It asserted that "Alpha 66 has begun the war. It does not consist in a small, isolated action, nor a simple small-scale skirmish."

Earlier Alpha spokesmen confirmed that their guerrillas had clashed with Castroite forces near Baracoa. They said the military leader of the expedition was Capt. Vicente Mendez, 39, a one-time follower of Castro who turned against him.

Castro reported Sunday that three of the invaders were captured alive and that the rest—no numbers were given—were being hunted down.